

Parks & Recreation Board Meeting Minutes

The Parks and Recreation Board of the City of Mesa met in a regular session at the Parks and Recreation office at 200 S. Center Street, Building 1, Mesa, on November 12, 2008.

Members Present:

Frank Alger
Brian Etheridge
Russ Gillard
Don Goodrum
Connie Gullatt-Whiteman
Tim Gump
Steve Ikeda
David Martinez
Michelle Udall
Marilyn Wilson
Mark Yarbrough

Staff Present:

Dawn Bies	Andrea Moore
J.D. Dockstader	Kelly Rafferty
Rhett Evans	Rochelle Rotert
Mike Holste	Jodi Sorrell
Bob Huhn	Sherry Woodley
Mike James	

The meeting was called to order at 3:31 p.m. by Connie Gullatt-Whiteman, Chair.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked for a motion for approval of the minutes from the October 8, 2008 Parks Board meeting. Mark Yarbrough made a motion, Russ Gillard seconded, and it was unanimously carried to approve the minutes.

Public Comments

A citizen, Tawni McBee, asked to address the Board regarding the future development of Countryside Park as a dog park. She was aware that donation money to build a dog park at Countryside Park had been withdrawn and suggested to the Board to move the dog walk area currently located in the basin area to the section near Southern Avenue. She suggested not building a larger dog park, but just fencing in a dog walk area along Southern to ensure the safety of citizens and their dogs, while providing a dog area at a lower price.

Update on Light Rail by Pioneer Park

Mike James from the Transportation Department updated the Board on the status of the Light Rail in Mesa and the impact to park lands. He said that within the next few months, staff would be developing a locally preferred alternative to go to Council outlining the transit technology options (Light Rail, Bus Rapid Transit, etc.) and where the alignment will be. They will follow up with an environmental impact statement or an environment assessment, which will provide in-depth information on the impact to park land.

Mr. James said an end-of-line station would require approximately 900 parking spaces and that a final location has not yet been identified. He said that the impact to park land along Main Street (at Pioneer Park) was one of the factors being considered.

The two locations currently being considered for an end-of-line station are Mesa Drive or Home Road. There will be public meetings early next year (2009) as they get closer to developing a preferred alternative, at which more updated information will be provided.

Steve Ikeda asked for a completion date for the station to be built. Mr. James answered that the year 2015 had been identified for a completion date.

Update on PRCF Budget

Rhett Evans discussed with the Board the impending budget cuts the City is facing. He stated that the City is not immune to what is going on in the nation's economy, and locally, the City relies heavily on sales tax. Sales tax collections have continued to decrease this year even more than what was projected; therefore, the City will be making some drastic budget reductions immediately. He explained that budget cuts usually occur the following fiscal year (in this case 2009-10) and start the first of July. However, it has become imperative to take measures now to balance the budget going forward. He said that he has been meeting with the City Manager to finalize the department's budget cuts and discussing the reorganization and how the department will do business in the future, given that layoffs are imminent. He also told the Board that every area of the department would be affected by the budget cuts, including youth sports, adaptive programs, swimming pools, recreation centers and administration.

PRCF department changes will be announced the first week of December, and Mr. Evans suggested that the Board dedicate the December meeting to the budget and reorganization. He said that the City-wide reorganization will not be temporary, but a long-term approach to the way it does business.

Mr. Evans told the Board that the Fees and Charges Subcommittee meetings have been postponed until the budget reductions have been finalized because there is no need to establish fees for some programs that may not exist. Meetings will resume in December once Council has approved the PRCF budget cuts. Staff will review the subcommittee's decisions with the Board in January and ask the Board to take action so staff can present the fees and charges to Budget & Research by the February deadline.

Marilyn Wilson said that eliminating youth programs would be detrimental to the City, and she would like to see these programs continue to be funded.

Mr. Yarbrough agreed with Ms. Wilson's comments, and also asked that youth sports organizations be given ample notice of fee increases.

Update on Dog Park at Countryside Park

J.D. Dockstader told the Board that the dog park donation from Bark Avenue Pet Resort has been rescinded. He said that there was a citizen present at the last meeting who was concerned about the current designated dog park area, stating that he and his neighboring residents thought the area was designated for a future branch library and recreation center. Mr. Dockstader said the citizen's statement was correct, that a site plan does exist with those future buildings; however, nothing has been adopted by City Council or a past Parks Board. Because there is no longer current sponsorship funding, Mr. Dockstader said that it is staff's recommendation to not take any action on this parcel, other than identifying a need in the Parks Master Plan for a dog park in the general vicinity, but not necessarily designating the Countryside parcel as a dog park. He said this will allow some flexibility should sponsors come forth in the future.

Mr. Gillard said that the Foundation for Mesa Parks and Recreation has approximately \$15,000-\$20,000 from dog park fundraising efforts and asked Mr. Dockstader how much a fence at Countryside Park along Southern Avenue would cost in order to keep dogs from running onto the street. Mr. Dockstader said he did not have accurate cost estimates for the type of fencing that would be needed along Southern Avenue, but reminded the Board that a dog park also has the added expense of associated maintenance/cleaning costs.

Report on Trust for Public Land Data for FY 06/07

Andrea Moore shared an article from the Mesa Independent and went over the Trust for Public Land (TPL) annual report on City Park Facts.

Ms. Moore said that through a survey, TPL annually compiles a database of park facts for the 75 largest cities in the United States. The City of Mesa participates in this survey and uses the data for benchmarking. Ms. Moore gave the Board handouts showing the results of the survey and where Mesa ranked against other cities of comparable size. Ms. Moore also gave the Board a handout, prepared by Mesa resident Nate Caine, comparing an array of amenities which Mesa provides its citizens to those of other cities (e.g., Glendale, Tucson, Oakland, CA) of similar density that we typically benchmark against.

Listed below are some of the survey statistics the Board received:

- 66th out of 75 cities for park acres per thousand residents and 10.5 park acres per thousand residents lower than the average for cities similar in density
- 58th out of 75 cities for total expenditures per resident and \$37 lower in total expenditures per resident than the average city
- 54th out of 75 cities for capital expenditures per resident and \$11 lower in capital expenditures per resident than the average city

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman and Mr. Gillard thanked Mr. Caine for his time in preparing the comparison charts.

Discuss and take action on changes to pool targets for Master Plan

Ms. Moore explained to the Board that discussions with aquatics program staff and Mesa Public Schools (MPS) have led City staff to recommend a revision to the service model for the pools to focus more on regional pools. In the future, staff will look at pool closures of neighborhood pools that do not have amenities and consider constructing larger amenity pools at high schools as opposed to the junior high locations. At the request of MPS, a change to the existing Master Plan is recommended to add a target area around Mesa High School for a pool at some point in the future.

Ms. Moore said that this creates a total estimated development cost of \$197 million, even with the additional pool. She told the Board that with this revision, the Master Plan shows 10 pools in place by 2030 instead of the original 18 pools. She also said that this revises the standard of approximately 1 pool per 35,000 residents to .6 pools for every 35,000 residents. Ms. Moore concluded by saying that staff is recommending this amendment to the Master Plan and will present the Master Plan update changes to the City Council Community & Neighborhood Services Subcommittee on December 4th.

Ms. Wilson asked if this amendment to the Master Plan should be based on the assumption that a number of older pools would be closed. Mr. Evans responded by saying that this amendment follows the model that has been created with the larger competitive/amenity pool planned at Skyline High School, where the service circle becomes bigger and strategically placed in the City. By closing the smaller, older pools in need of serious repair, they will now be replaced by larger amenity pools at high schools, providing larger service circles on the Master Plan.

Ms. Udall asked if the cost of a remodeling project can be more expensive than starting a new project. Mr. Evans said that a remodel can sometimes cost more. Mr. Evans said that some of the junior high pools were built approximately 50 years ago, and the model now has shifted to providing the pools for the teams at the high school instead of bussing them to the junior high.

Mr. Gillard made a motion to approve the proposal to revise the pool targets on the 2030 Master Plan; Don Goodrum seconded, and it was unanimously carried to approve the motion to revise the pool targets on the 2030 Master Plan.

Update on Beverly Park status

Ms. Moore told the Board that she and Mr. Ikeda had attended the Mesa Grande Alliance general membership meeting two weeks ago. She reported that Mesa Grande is assuming responsibility for determining what kind of public support there is for the Beverly parcel by surveying property owners adjacent to the parcel. She learned that with the surveys received to date, residents surrounding the parcel are in favor of having a park developed, including a small scale off-leash dog park with a small exercise area in order to keep more activity and interest at the park. Ms. Moore also stated that Mesa Grande wants to complete the survey and submit the results to the Parks Board to discuss what kind of community support there is for amenities. Ms. Moore said that at that time the Board could discuss what kind of partnering opportunities there are for development and maintenance.

Mr. Ikeda added that he spoke to a couple of people at the Mesa Grande meeting and thought that not all of the area residents were in favor of keeping the parcel.

Chair Comments

- Parks Board Request for City Council attendance at meetings – Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman told the Board that Mr. Gillard wrote a letter to the City Council on behalf of himself and Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman inviting Council members to attend Parks Board meetings or send a representative from the Council Office. Mr. Gillard said he told the Council that if they could possibly attend some meetings, they would understand the Board's rationale behind the action taken on various topics that come before the Board. The only reply received was from Councilmember Scott Somers who said that he understood and suggested that the advisory board chairs coordinate with Council staff to have the Parks Board included in the presentation to council. That way, Council not only gets a report from staff, but the experience and input of the advisory board members.
- 2030 Plan commentary – Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman said that Todd Hoover from the Mesa Independent newspaper had attended the October 23rd Parks and Recreation 2030 Master Plan Update meeting and subsequently wrote an article in response to the meeting. She stated that five Board members had attended the meeting as well and were mentioned in the article along with Mr. Caine, who was quoted several times. Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman said that she had been asked to write an article for the Independent giving her point of view regarding the 2030 Master Plan and hoped to submit it the week of November 17th.

Director's Comments

- Calendar of Events (update on past/present events) – Mr. Evans reminded the Board to access the PRCF website for upcoming events. He stated that Fit City will be held November 22nd at Mountain View Park with a 5K walk/run; the December 13th Fit City will be a 3K walk, called Jingle Bell Walk. Mr. Evans also noted that a key study session will be held on November 20th where the City Council will be briefed on the City's budget shortfall and how much and where the City will need to make the cuts.

Mr. Evans thanked the Board members for their support and told them that staff appreciated all the time and effort they contributed as citizens for the community.

Mr. Gillard asked Mr. Evans what will happen with the Fit City program in 2009. Mr. Evans said that the program will more than likely be cut from the budget. Ms. Udall asked if the program cost a lot of money to administer. Mr. Evans said that over 900 people registered to participate, and with the sponsors, the program paid for itself; however, with the budget cuts it has become a staffing issue.

Reports on meetings and/or events attended by Board Members

David Martinez told the Board that he had been participating in Adult Softball program; he said everything seems to be running very smoothly.

Tim Gump said he had attended the opening of the Veranda Restaurant. He also attended a couple of the downtown Mesa events on Saturdays.

Mr. Goodrum will be attending the Turkey Trot at Red Mountain Park.

Ms. Wilson attended the 2030 Master Plan Update on October 23rd.

Frank Alger had been working on the committee to host the Veteran's Day Parade. He said the parade had 115 entries and went well.

Mr. Ikeda attended the Mesa Grande meeting and the 2030 Master Plan Update on October 23rd, as well as the District 4 Pancake Breakfast.

Brian Etheridge said that his wife was involved in a Kickball League in Scottsdale with 8 teams participating. He thought it could be a low-cost program for Mesa to provide.

Mr. Gillard said he attended the 2030 Master Plan Update on October 23rd, as well as working with the Foundation for Mesa Parks and Recreation. He said he plans on participating in the Turkey Trot. He has also been participating in Fall League Senior Softball.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman reported that she had attended the 2030 Master Plan Update on October 23rd.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman concluded the meeting by reminding the Board that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday, December 10th. She said the agenda would be primarily dedicated to the City's current budget shortfall and its future impact on the PRCF Department; the January meeting would include taking action on fees and charges. Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman also asked the Board to please let Dawn Bies know if they *will* or *will not* be attending the December meeting via email or phone.

Ms. Gullatt-Whiteman asked if there were any other items for discussion; the Board had no additional comments. Mr. Alger made a motion to adjourn, Mark Yarbrough seconded, and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Rhett Evans
Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities Department Director